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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	USSR (Irkutsk Oblast)	REPORT	
SUBJECT	1. Forced Labor Camps in Irkutsk Oblast 2. Rail and Industrial Construction in Irkutsk Oblast	DATE DISTR.	28 February 1957 25X1
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2. The report includes the following information:

- a. Forced labor camps: Living conditions, medical care, work methods, personnel, procedures for release and rehabilitation, and improvements in camp conditions since the death of Stalin are described.
- b. Construction of railroads and industrial installations: This section contains general information on construction of the Tayshet-Bodaybo Railroad, including brief reference to bridge construction across the Angara River at Bratsk (N 56-102, E 101-40) and across the Chuna River near Tayshet (N 55-57, E 98-02). Also referred to are heavy industrial construction on the Vykhorevka River; construction of a harbor, power plant, warehouses, and a plant for the production and maintenance of railroad engines and trucks at Ust-Kut (N 56-46, E 105-40); and unconfirmed reports of the construction of defense plants near the Lena and Angara Rivers in Irkutsk Oblast.

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Comment: Reference paragraph 15, on 4 November 1954, Pravda reported the completion of a section of the BAM about 700 km long, extending from Tayshet to Ust-Kut, via Bratsk.

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Living Conditions

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1. The following information refers to the class of labor camps known as "I.T.R. Ispravitelnye Trudovye Lagery", which is the most common of Soviet penal institutions and in which the majority of slave laborers are interned. Of other classes, such as the "Special camps" ^{spetslagery} ("Spets Lagery") and "Isolation camps" (Polit Izolatory), it can only be said that very little is known about the prisoners' fate there, except that they are subjected to far stricter discipline and forbidden to communicate with the outside world.

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2. Since 1950 certain changes in the treatment of prisoners in the camps were ~~observed~~ felt, but the important modifications in the conditions of life date from Stalin's death, and especially from the fall of Beria. Since then special courts (Osoboye Sovyeshchanie) appear to have ceased their activities, and new arrivals at the camps

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SECRET

- 2 -

25X1

had been sentenced by ordinary courts and received less severe terms. The normal five to six year extension of the term shortly before the termination of the original sentence has been abolished, as well as the obligation of the prisoner to settle down exclusively in the outlying areas designated by the authorities.

3. In the past, the duration of a working day depended in effect on the fulfillment of the daily quota, although regulations limited it to the hours between 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. At present the regulations are literally interpreted and there is a day of rest once a week as well as on the national holidays. When the temperature falls below 55 degrees C. (F?) in winter, outdoor work is suspended, and the prisoners are employed in the workshops or with other indoor occupations. Greater attention is paid to the prevention of work accidents, and the once high accident rate has considerably decreased in recent years.

4. That the camp food has improved is best demonstrated by the fact that prisoners no longer scavenge garbage for anything edible, and thefts of foodstuffs have practically disappeared. The distribution of daily rations depends on a number of officials, such as the accountant, the cashier, the supply officer, and the camp commandant, and despite detailed regulations as to the quantitative and qualitative composition of the meals, the food is still very dull. The situation was, however, considerably ameliorated by the expansion of the chain of "Layok" shops for groceries, and the granting of permission to receive food parcels. The daily 800 gram bread ration, supplied by the camp bakery, is of very poor quality. Food parcels are opened by camp

SECRET

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25X1

- 3 -

officials in the presence of the addressees, and handed over intact after a thorough search for contraband. In a number of cases prisoners' complaints about thefts of articles from their parcels resulted in investigations, and the complainants were subsequently informed that wardens had been found guilty and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. There is no longer a lack of tobacco, as "Makhorka" is available in unlimited quantities at the shops. Another sign of the improved food situation is the decreased number of scurvy cases.

5. Notable changes have been introduced with regard to prisoners' clothing, a subject which the authorities formerly almost ignored. At present, there is an issue of a complete set of winter clothes, including gloves, hat, and shoes, as well as of bed sheets, blankets, mattresses, and cushions. Coats bear distinctive markings in various colors in order to discourage escape. The value of lost articles is deducted from the prisoners' pay.

6. The prisoners' barracks were in the most miserable condition: roofs leaked, the floors were covered with ice in winter, there were no sanitary installations, and the place was crawling with vermin. At present convicts are accommodated in standard huts with a 50 - 54 person capacity, though the number of occupants is usually less in practice. There are four men to a cot, and two prisoners are detailed for cleaning up every day. Since 1954 prisoners at Angarskie I.T.R. are issued a sufficient amount of coal to keep their huts warm. Convicts employed in the administration and as craftsmen are housed separately and enjoy better living facilities. New arrivals, on the

SECRET

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- 4 -

other hand, have to construct their huts themselves, and are consequently obliged to spend their nights in the open until the completion of the work. Prisoners in transit have to undergo even greater hardships: locked up in overcrowded railway trucks, their rations consist of bread, lard, and salt fish, without any hot meals and in many cases without drink throughout a journey which may take days.

Medical Care

7. The prisoners' state of health has considerably improved with the changes in food supply and the issue of clothing and linen, and the mortality rate has proportionally decreased. There are, moreover, fewer cases of typhus since the distribution of soap and insecticides was introduced to the camps. The regulation which provides for the washing of clothes every ten days is generally observed, and each prisoner is given the opportunity of daily ablutions. The sanitary section is commanded by an officer. The medical staff, however, is comprised completely of prisoners. In the past, the medical officer's principal task consisted in maintaining the prisoners' state of health at a level that permitted their being certified as fit for work, which did not exempt even those suffering from serious complaints. At present, doctors may declare weak or ill prisoners unfit for duty without considering the exigencies of work, and greater care in general is taken to preserve the inmates' health. If anybody reports sick at the morning parade ("razvod") and is declared unfit for work by the medical officer, not even the camp commander may reverse the decision. Patients receive treatment at the camp hospital, whose standard is comparable to

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SECRET

25X1

- 5 -

that of ordinary institutions in the country, and serious cases are transferred to the central hospital which is a camp in itself. With reference to hospital equipment and the supply of drugs, conditions in Angarsk^y I.T.R. are satisfactory. Patients are treated with penicillin and, in some case, streptomycin. Formerly, when convicts arrived at the camps in a state of complete exhaustion, doctors were unable to help, for lack of food and equipment, and had to watch the spreading of typhus and deaths from malnutrition, once a most frequent occurrence in all camps. At that time, prisoners regarded the hospital merely as a place to die in peace. Although there is at present still room for improvements, the situation in this field is considerably better than in former years.

Work Method

8. In 1950 the "Khozraschet" method was introduced in the camps, according to which prisoners are paid for their work at the same rate as free employees in the identical occupation. After deduction of the total cost of the prisoner's maintenance and medical care, his wages are paid into an account, of which he may dispose as he thinks fit. Daily wages average 18 rubles, thus corresponding to the earnings of an ordinary unskilled worker. Prisoners are entitled to receive information about the balance of their accounts at all times. Those released in 1954 left the camp with an average of a few hundred rubles in their possession.

9. One of the most important changes effected during recent years concerns the limitation of the camp commander's authority, which was previously practically absolute. Commandants now abstain from abusing

SECRET

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SECRET

25X1

- 6 -

prisoners, cases of outright violence have become very rare, and measures of punishment have become less severe. The traditional methods of beatings, withholding or shortening of rations, exposure to the cold, and overwork have been either abolished or were transferred to the prosecutor's (Prokuror's) authority. Prisoners are entitled to complain at the State Attorney's office, and feel that this right is influencing the camp officials' behavior towards them.

Release Procedure and Rehabilitation

10. With rare exceptions, prisoners are at present unconditionally released after the termination of their sentences. Release procedures are carried out in a transit camp, to which the prisoner is dispatched three days before the date of his discharge. The treatment and conditions of these transit camps are satisfactory. The prisoner informs the commandant of his intended place of residence, which must exclude Moscow, Leningrad, any of the state capitals, and frontier areas. He receives a railway ticket free of charge, as well as 800 grams of bread, 100 grams of salt fish, and 20 grams of sugar for each day of travel. On leaving the transit camp the ex-convict is issued a certificate ("Spravka") containing his personal particulars, the section of the law in accordance to which he had been detained, and the length of his sentence. This document serves as his means of identification until the issuance of an ordinary identity card.

11. Whenever the M.V.D. is about to arrest a Party member, the cell secretary of the suspect is first informed and has subsequently to be present in order to receive the accused's membership card, which may

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25X1

- 7 -

not be handed to any other person. Other personal documents are kept at the archives of the M.V.D. and are returned to the ex-convict at his request after his release. This is achieved by submitting a written application to the M.V.D. at his place of residence; the released documents do not, however, include the former identity card.

Those whose sentence included forfeiture of civil rights ("^{prav}Porazhenie ^{Prava}") for a certain length of time or for life, do not regain their military reserve booklet either, as they may not serve with the armed forces, vote, nor occupy any public office.

12. The first tasks confronting the ex-convict at his place of residence are to gain possession of an identity card and to register as an inhabitant. In order to achieve the former, he has to submit a copy of his camp certificate, a special form for this purpose with three photographs, and the sum of three rubles to the police. The identity card is issued three days later, and on this occasion the recipient has to sign his name at the appropriate place on the document in the presence of the police officer in charge. After that, the ex-convict takes the necessary steps for complying with the law, according to which every citizen has to register with the local authorities within three days of his arrival. For this purpose, he has to submit an application together with his identity card, and a certificate of the owner of his apartment, as well as the written agreement of the house warden ("^{Domovoye}Upravleniye") to the official in charge of the registration section of the police ("^{Nachalnik}Rayonnogo Upravleniya Pasportinogo Stola"). If the latter offers no objections a special form, which is on sale at every kiosk, is filed, and the applicant's

SECRET

25X1

- 8 -

name is entered into the house register. His new address is put into his identity card as well as a stamp bearing the word "Propisan" (registered).

13. In the event that permission of residence is withheld, the applicant may direct his request to a higher authority, such as the director of the town registration department ("Nachalnik Gorodskogo Otdeleniya Upravleniya Paspornogo Stola"), and eventually to the oblast registrar. If the original decision is not reversed by the latter, the applicant has no choice but to leave the town.

14. Only after the ex-convict is in possession of an identity card and has been registered may he start his search for work, since he will have to answer inquiries on this subject at every enterprise. Vacancies are published at the information office ("Reklambyuro"), the registration authority, and at the notice boards of plants. Applicants are interviewed by personnel managers ("Inspektori Pokadram") and have to submit a curriculum vitae and any documents certifying former occupation, as well as to produce their identity card. Ex-convicts frequently encounter difficulties at their first attempts to find work, and are entitled to appeal to the local M.V.D. for their intervention. At least one such appeal is known to have been successful.

BODAYBO

The Construction of the "Taishet-Bodaybo" Railroad

15. The inmates of Angarsk's I.T.R. were mainly employed on the construction of the railway line which connects Taishet with Bratsk, on the Angara river, Zayarsk and Ust-Kut on the Lena. The total length of this line is 800 kilometers. Work at the other end was simultaneously started in Bodaybo, the center of the gold mines and was to meet the

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- 9 -

first team in Ust-Kut. The project reportedly forms part of the trans-Siberian railroad which terminates at the port of Sovetskaya Gavan. The construction team starting from Bodaybo was entirely composed of soldiers, and did not comprise any convicts.

16. Work on the project, originally initiated in 1937, was interrupted in 1940 and resumed in 1947. According to plans, the line is to be handed over to the railway authorities in 1956. The project calls for two pairs of rails, but only a single line existed in 1954.

17. Some 20,000 prisoners were brought to Talsket in 1947, and with the progress of work in the direction of Bratsk the camp staff moved there in 1948, and to Zayarsk and Ust-Kut in 1950 and 1952 respectively. The construction of the line necessitated the construction of two bridges:

- a. An iron bridge of 1.5 km length across the Angara, at Bratsk
- b. A 30 m long iron bridge over the Cherna, located at kilometer 101, east of Talsket.

CHUNA

A power station and a plant for the manufacture of locomotives and railway trucks were set up on the banks of the Vihorovka, at kilometer 271.

VIMOREYKA

18. In 1950, three brigades of 800 prisoners each, moved to Ust-Kut for the purpose of building a harbor there. The construction of a power station, a plant for the production and maintenance of railway engines and trucks, and a number of large store houses was completed in 1952. Standard wooden huts were put up near the stations at Ust-Kut, Zayarsk, Bratsk, and Talsket for the accommodation of 2,000 people

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SECRET

- 10 -

25X1

at each of these places.

19. According to unconfirmed reports, large defense plants have been erected near the Lena and Angara rivers in the District of Irkutsk.

Personalities

20. The following personalities at the Angarskie I.T.R. were known:

a. Ivanov (fmu),

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b. Kemarovitch

c. Logvinuk (fmu),

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